106. Educational reforms with special reference to a well co-ordinated scheme of Vernacular, English and Industrial education.

Mr. C. P. Thomas B. A., L. T. (Member, Nominated) began by remarking that educational ideas had undergone rapid and radical changes throughout the world during the past ten years and that every system had to be examined and modified with a view to adjust it to changing ideals and environments. The education now imparted was too literary and was lacking in practical training for the active work of life; it consisted in receiving and retaining the ideas of others, while little was done by way of drawing out and training the varied faculties of the young mind. It neglected the moral and spiritual side of the pupil with the result that he was sadly lacking in well disciplined and elevated moral character. The public and the Government were not unaware of the above defects and the several changes proposed and introduced from time to time into the educational system bore testimony to it. The Education Expenditure Committee and the Vernacular Curricula Revision Committee were also the results of the public consciousness of a change in outlook. The proposals of the Vernacular Curricula Revision Committee affected English education on the one hand and industrial schools on the other, and it was hoped that the Conference which was proposed to be held for considering the reports of the two Committees would arrive at satisfactory conclusions which would remedy the defects in the existing system of education.

The Member then proceeded to deal with the lower grade vernacular schools. He was of opinion that there was much waste of time and money, because the work provided for pupils in the two lowest classes was far too little for two years, making due allowance for the age of the children. As a result, most parents gave their children private tuition for one year and took them to the third class. There would not have been so much waste of time in the first class, had there been a system of kindergarten training. The work was only sufficient for 3 or 4 months and hence the tendency for the child and the teacher to idle away the remaining time. That was dangerous and should be avoided. He suggested that a three years' course was sufficient for primary education and Class IV might be made part of the higher grade branch of those schools. An alternative suggestion put forward by the Member was that class work to pupils in classes I and II should be given only for half the day. The two and a half hours during which instruction should be given might be conveniently divided into 4 or 5 periods, not all of the same duration. Such an arrangement would facilitate the appointment of a single teacher for two classes and would effect considerable economy in the educational budget. During the other half of the day, the pupils might be allowed free physical activity subject to local conditions, which could be turned along lines of educational and economic value without the organised control of a paid teacher.

Another important suggestion of the Member was that the difference between boys' schools and girls' schools in the primary stage should be done away with and that all those schools should be staffed by lady teachers who were more fitted to teach children. That should be the ideal to be worked up to.

After the lower grade vernacular stage, the course bifurcated into higher grade vernacular and lower grade English schools. The result was that a pupil was forced to make the choice at that stage—a stage at which it would be preposterous to expect a pupil to judge of his talents and tendencies and choose for himself a course which would make or mar his future career. It was only fair and equitable, therefore, to put off the stage for the choice of a course and to afford every facility for pupils to change from one to the other with the least waste of time and money. The Member admitted that recently there was a relaxation in the rigidity of the original plan as devised by Dr. Mitchell. But that was inadequate and what was needed was the change of the entire system. The Member pleaded that, up to Class VI, grouping classes IV to VI as one grade of school, education should be common to all pupils and imparted in such a manner as to form the basis for a mental training for any course of further studies, secondary and collegiate (English or vernacular) or technical and industrial. That could be effected, if the recommendations

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of the Vernacular Curricula Revision Committee in regard to the compulsory introduction of English and vocational training were accepted and acted upon. After the above elementary course of education, the Member desired to have a Preparatory Class before a pupil was admitted to a regular English school or the industrial, technical or vocational school proper. A test at the end of the Preparatory Class might be applied for excluding all those who could not be benefited by the higher course. A pupil eliminated at that stage would be better equipped for life than a pupil of Form III of the present day. The Member recognised that, without an efficient staff of English teachers under the guidance of a headmaster who must be either a graduate or the holder of an Intermediate Certificate in Arts or at least one who had passed one of the branches of the latter examination after a three years' course in a College, the proposed schools would be a sad failure. The Member pointed out that the same idea of an elementary or middle school was recommended by the Committee of Enquiry on Village Education in India, consisting of distinguished missionary educationists with Mr. A. F. Fraser M. A. as Chairman.

The scheme of vocational education should be gradually introduced from school to school with due regard to local conditions. The Industrial schools under his scheme should continue to be under the control of the Education department and not under the Department of Industries. It should be placed under a special inspecting and organising officer of the department with experience and enthusiasm for work.

The Member further pointed out that it would be ruinous to create a body of technical workers and handicraftsmen without giving them a proper general education so as to enable them to appreciate the value of the events and forces around them. Hence the youth of the country should not be drawn to a purely vocational or technical learning after the fourth class course, but they should receive a mental and moral equipment of a three years' general education along with the preparatory training for some vocation.

Another advantage of the scheme consisted in the importance of teaching subjects of general knowledge in the vernacular—a proposal which had met with the approval of such an eminent body as the Calcutta University Commission. The ideal should be to make vernacular the medium of instruction throughout the High School course. It should be so in all classes below Form IV. The proposal to have a Preparatory Class before Form II was to strengthen the knowledge of the pupils in English. The Member added that the entire scheme should be carefully examined and discussed, and if the concensus of educational opinion was in favour of it, no time should be lost in introducing the same throughout the State, despite the financial difficulties involved in its practical application.

If, however, the lower grade English schools should be kept separate for the present, the Member was strongly of opinion that in them also proper provision should be made for vocational training to enable a pupil to enter a High school or an industrial institute. He also emphasised the need for providing a technical side to the high school course as well, by teaching at least commercial subjects so that the pupil might have, in the event of failure in the regular course, an avenue for eking out his livelihood. The need for such a course was felt every day as a result of the appalling failures in the School Final Examination.

Dewan's reply.—The Government are thankful for the thoughtful remarks and suggestions you have made. All your suggestions will be considered very carefully by the Conference.

107. Certain suggestions for improving Vernacular education.

Mr. K. J. Kochippan Mappilla (Member, Municipal Council, Tiruvalla) first spoke about the maintenance of school buildings. Several of these were built by the people and handed over to Government. All these were utterly neglected and the loss consequent on further delay in maintaining the school buildings

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